



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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FLOOR STATEMENT OF REP. FLOYD D. SPENCE

CHAIRMAN, HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF U.S. TROOPS

IN OPERATIONS AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA

I rise in support of the resolution. While I have deep reservations about the direction of U.S. policy in the Balkans and the wisdom of intervening on the ground in Kosovo, I have no reservations whatsoever about the patriotism, dedication, professionalism and courage of the men and women who serve this country in uniform.

Indeed, since 1992, when American pilots began to conduct no-fly-zone operations over Bosnia and sailors began to enforce a maritime exclusion zone around the former Yugoslavia, hundreds of thousands of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines have served with distinction in operations in and around the Balkans. Their record of service is a source of pride to us all. These young people truly represent the best America has to offer.

The operations now underway over Yugoslavia represent a new chapter. Though these attacks have been meticulously planned and are undoubtedly being conducted with consummate skill, they are perhaps more dangerous than any previous operations in the Balkans. The President has rightly spoken of the risks to our personnel, for they are real and considerable – what we are witnessing in the skies over Serbia is unquestionably a war. Now, more than ever, U.S. armed forces in and around the Balkans need and deserve our support.

They also deserve the backing of a sound policy. Even if the air campaign now underway is successful, it will merely be the opening move in Kosovo. The next step is the deployment of NATO and U.S. ground troops into the midst of a civil war where the Kosovars are committed to independence, and where the Serbs determined to preserve what they regard as their historic homeland.

Thus, there is neither an “end-date” nor an achievable “end-state” in Kosovo. This is an open-ended mission where success is impossible to define, as is the mission of U.S. troops.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and send a clear message of strong support to our men and women in uniform as they place their lives in danger in the skies over Yugoslavia.

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